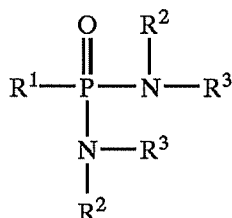


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-13 (Canceled)

14. (Withdrawn) An agent for extracting a rare earth metal ion, comprising the phosphonamide compound represented by the general formula [1]

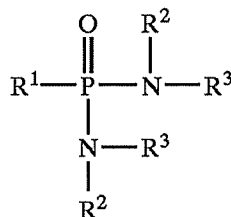
[1]



(wherein R¹ represents an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an alkynyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; R² represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; R³ represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; and the two R³s may be united to form an alkylene group, a cycloalkylene group or an arylene group).

15. (Currently Amended) A process for extracting a rare earth metal ion from an aqueous solution containing a rare earth metal ion, ~~characterized by~~ comprising using as an extraction agent the phosphonamide compound represented by the general formula [1]

[1]



(wherein R¹ represents an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an alkynyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; R² represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; R³ represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each group may have a substituent; and the two R³s may be united to form an alkylene group, a cycloalkylene group or an arylene group).

16. (Original) The extraction process according to claim 15, wherein an organic solvent is used for extraction.

17. (Currently Amended) The extraction process according to claim 16, wherein the organic solvent is ~~an organic solvent which~~ is not completely miscible with water.

18. (Original) The extraction process according to claim 15, wherein an aqueous solution containing a rare earth metal ion, a phosphonamide compound represented by the general formula [1] and an organic solvent which is not completely miscible with water are mixed and contacted, whereby the metal ion is transferred to the organic solvent layer.

19. (Original) A process for back-extracting a rare earth metal ion, characterized by that the organic solvent layer comprising the extracted rare earth metal ion by the extraction process according to claim 18 is mixed and contacted with a water, whereby the metal ion is transferred to the aqueous layer.

20. (Original) The back-extraction process according to claim 19, wherein the water for mixing and contacting is a weakly acidic or acidic water.

21. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein R^1 is phenyl.

22. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein R^1 is phenyl and R^2 is methyl.

23. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein R^1 is phenyl, R^2 is methyl and the two R^3 s are united.

24. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein the two R^3 s are united to form an ethylene group or a propylene group.

25. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein the R^3 represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group.

26. (New) The process of claim 15, wherein R^3 represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a heterocyclic group, substituted or unsubstituted and the two R^3 s may be united to form an alkylene group, a cycloalkylene group or an arylene group, but not a crown ether moiety.